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DISORGANIZATION OF BULGARIAN RAIL OPERATIONS

Until recently, the Bulgarian government was entirely satisfied with the operation of the railroads. It is well known to the public that this is no longer the case. There are many reasons for this.

The rolling stock, especially the locomotives, is deficient. There is a very limited number of modern units, and because of traffic demands, the locomotives are inspected only every 6 months. The locomotives use a second-grade coal, which is very sulfurous and damages the grates and the boilers. As a result there are frequent breakdowns of locomotives on both freight and passenger trains, and delays which are disorganizing traffic. There is an insufficient number of reserve locomotives on hand.

These delays often amount to 3 or 4 hours for passenger trains on runs of less than 400 kilometers, and are even greater in the case of freight trains. As a result, the rail network is completely disorganized, because more than half of the lines are still single track. Freight delays are caused partly by overloading the cars, which results in broken axles, and partly by the lack of continuous braking, due to the use of many types of cars, which forces the engineer to use slower speeds on certain downgrades than those prescribed in the schedules.

To these technical difficulties is added the poor physical condition of the employees. Not only have the wages of railroad employees been reduced since May 1952, but the canteens have been closed since last October. Although a bonus system permits the salaries of firemen and engineers to remain relatively higher in this sector than in others, for the last 2

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months there has been an almost total absence of highly nourishing foods in the stores and markets. Meat, milk, fatty foods, eggs, and butter have become black-market foods. Thus, physical breakdowns of railroad personnel have become more and more numerous.

To improve rail operations, the Bulgarian government is considering placing orders for cars and locomotives with Western European industry, especially with Austrian and Silesian enterprises. The government already is buying Austrian coal, which, according to my Yugoslav friend, is shipped by rail via Dimitrovgrad and Dragoman.

It is a question whether the Silesian and Austrian industries would be able to handle the orders for railroad equipment, as Soviet and Czech enterprises seem to be unable to do so.

The government has had the press publish a warning to railroad employees to redouble their efforts, and to the Ministry of Transportation to change its methods. Rumors of an impending purge of the administrative leaders of the ministry are already circulating in the city.

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